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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 001384

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KS KN
SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC PARTY SUPPORTS DPRK SANCTIONS WHILE URGING DIALOGUE

Classified By: POL M/C James L. Wayman. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On August 23, members of the U.S. Presidential Delegation to former President Kim Dae-jung's funeral met with leaders of the opposition, left-of-center Democratic Party (DP). The Korean lawmakers were frankly critical of U.S. and South Korean policy toward the North. Nevertheless, they condemned North Korean provocations, conceding that these actions had impeded efforts at dialogue, and acknowledged the need for sanctions to push North Korea back to the bargaining table. The lawmakers underscored the importance of U.S.-North Korean dialogue within the framework of the Six-Party Talks and expressed their hope that the U.S. and South Korea could work together to realize Kim Dae-jung's goals of a non-nuclear, peaceful Korean Peninsula. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Comment: New in the DP's talking points were the criticisms of the North's provocative actions and the acceptance of the need for sanctions. The North's recent gestures to the South and President Lee's meeting with the North Korean funeral delegation in Seoul -- not to mention Kim Dae-jung's passing -- has left the DP struggling to have its voice heard on North Korea policy. The party's new, more critical tone toward North Korea may reflect a revision of the party's traditionally more pro-North policy line. End Comment.

Paying Tribute to Kim Dae-jung

¶3. (C) In an August 23 meeting between the U.S. Presidential Delegation to former President Kim Dae-jung's funeral and Democratic Party (DP) leaders, Representative Park Joo-sun expressed the party's appreciation that the delegation had come to Korea to pay its respects to former President Kim Dae-jung. Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright expressed her sadness at Kim Dae-jung's death and her pleasure at having the opportunity to remember him for anchoring democracy in South Korea. Former Secretary Albright noted that when was Vice-Chair of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) she made her first visit to Korea. At that time, she met with Kim Dae-jung, who was under house arrest.

DP Disappointed with U.S. Policy toward NK

¶4. (C) Park quickly segued from pleasantries to express the DP's disappointment with the Obama Administration's North Korea policy. He said the party had expected that the new government would take a different approach and that there would be robust and rapid progress towards denuclearization and peace on the Korean peninsula. He said the DP also felt

that Korean issues seem to have a lower priority to the Obama Administration. Representative Song Min-soon was highly critical of President Lee Myung-bak's North Korea policy and said Lee's actions and his aides' harsh rhetoric belied his public calls for dialogue with the DPRK.

DP Supportive of Sanctions

¶5. (C) Representative Lee Mi-kyung said that the DP was deeply concerned about North Korea's provocations. Former President Kim Dae-jung's policies tried to advance relations, but North Korea's actions hindered progress. She noted that the party's criticism of Lee Myung-bak's policy and the Obama Administration's approach did not mean the party in any way supported North Korea's actions. The DP supported former President Kim Dae-jung's ultimate goal, Lee said -- a nuclear-free peninsula, peace, and reconciliation.

¶6. (C) Representative Park Joo-sun said the party supported the current sanctions effort against North Korea because giving North Korea the luxury of more time gave it bigger weapons to negotiate with.

DP Wants U.S.-DPRK Dialogue

¶7. (C) Representative Song Min-soon, who served as foreign minister under Roh Moo-hyun, said the U.S. should agree to bilateral talks with the DPRK, whether multilateral talks come first or not. The message coming from Washington, he said, was that bilateral could only come after North Korea returned to the Six-Party Talks. Synchronizing these talks would be difficult, but could be coordinated with the Six-Party Talks framework, he said.

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